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Housekeepers'Chat Tuesday, January 28, 1930.

Not for Publication

Subject: "Canaries, Their Care and Management."

Bulletin available: "Canaries, Their Care and Management." Leaflets available: "Hints on the Care of Parrots," "Hints on the care of Peafowl," and "Hints on the Care of White Mice and Rats."

--ooOoo--

Billy and I took a walk Sunday afternoon, through the grove of trees and underbrush that Billy calls our "forest." Near a little stream we found two ducks, which had evidently escaped from the near-by zoo. Billy was quite provoked, because the ducks wouldn't play with him. They waddled away, talking in excited quacks about little boys who disturb peaceful ducks on Sunday afternoons.

"Do you know what I'd like to have, Aunt Sammy?" Billy announced, suddenly. "I'd like to have a pet ostrich. If I had enough money, I'd buy an ostrich from the zoo, and train it to do tricks. Wouldn't that be fun?"

"Lots of fun. But it wouldn't be practical. I don't know what to feed ostriches."

"I do," said Billy. "Milk and eggs and fresh vegetables. That's what you tell me to eat."

"Yes, but ostriches are different. Why not choose a smaller bird for a pet, Billy?"

"A pelican!" shouted Billy. "Could I have a pelican?"

"Hardly. Try again."

"A parrot, then, a red and green parrot. I'd teach it to sing 'Drink to Me Only with Thine Eyes,' the way Uncle Ebenezer sings. Then, when I'm in school, you won't ever get lonesome, because the parrot will always be singing 'Drink to Me Only with Thine Eyes.' Wouldn't that be grand?"

"A generous thought," I agreed. "But, if you must have a bird, please choose one that knows how to sing. A canary, for instance."

To make my story short, yesterday we bought the canary, a beautiful yellow canary, in a square green cage. The bird-dealer told me that a square cage is better than a round one, because it gives the birds more room to exercise. As to size, a cage for one bird should not be smaller than 9-1/2 inches long, 6-1/2 inches wide, and 9 inches high. A larger size is

better. Other essentials are that cages be made of wire, and that they have containers for food and water, and of course, perches. Three perches are enough for a small cage. They should be placed in such a way that the canary won't strike its head or wings while flying or hopping from one to another.

Billy is responsible for taking care of our yellow canary. Last night I found him reading the bird bulletin I got for him yesterday.

"Read this," said Billy. "Read what it says about food for canaries."

So I read it, the whole section on food for canaries:

"The food requirements of canaries are simple. Canary seed, to which have been added rape seed, and a little hemp, is a staple diet that can be purchased ready mixed. Canary seed, alone, does not furnish a balanced food, but forms a good combination, with hemp, and summer rape. Much of the rape seed in prepared seed, sold in cartons, is of a species that even wild birds do not eat, as it is pungent, and bitter in flavor, but all relish the mild taste of true summer rape.

"In addition to a seed supply, lettuce, or a bit of apple, should be placed between the wires of the cage frequently. And the menu may be varied by adding chickweed, dandelion heads, thistle and plantain seeds, and the fruiting heads and tender leaves of shepherd's purse. Watercress, wild oats, knot grass, and other grasses are relished, especially in spring and in summer.

"Bread moistened in scalded milk, given cold at intervals, is beneficial. Don't make soft foods too wet. With bread add enough liquid to soften the food but not make it runny, or pasty. Keep your supply of moist food strictly fresh, or sickness may result. Drinking water should be available at all times. Cuttle bone should always be available.

"What's 'cuttle bone'"? asked Billy.

"Cuttle bone is what corresponds to a backbone in a squid or cuttle fish. It contains calcium, and birds in cages need it, as a relish, or an appetizer."

"Read some more'" urged Billy.

"I won't read this," I answered, "because it is about food for sick canaries, and yours is a very healthy one. The next paragraph is about taking care of baby canaries, and that doesn't interest us, either, at present. Here's something about bathing."

"Why doesn't our bird take a bath, Aunt Sammy?" asked Billy.

"Because, the book says, birds brought into a strange place may refuse to bathe, for the first few days. When water is offered, they either ignore it, or sit on the perch and go through all the motions of bathing and drying, fluttering wings and tail with a great whirring of feathers. The bath should be offered whenever the cage is cleaned, and if left alone, the birds

will take a bath after a few days.

"Under normal conditions, most birds probably bathe every day, and canaries in cages should be allowed the same opportunity. If the cage is an open wire one, remove the base, and place the cage over a small dish containing water.

"In open-front cages, in which the bottom is not detachable, small bath cages which fasten at the open door are used. These are only a few inches wide but serve to hold a dish for water. Many birds are notional in bathing and at times ignore the offered bath. Usually the process of cleaning the cage, and renewing the seed and water, will excite in them a desire for bathing, and often when a bath is not provided the bird will do its best to take a bath in the small supply of water in the drinking cup. When a bird obstinately refuses to enter the water, if enough clean sand to cover the bottom is placed in the dish he bathes more readily. After the bath the water is drained carefully and the sand left to dry in the dish for use another time."

"What kind of a dish does a bird take a bath in?" asked Billy.

"Be patient," I said, " and let me read: Small china or earthenware dishes that are not too deep make good bathing pans. When a bird becomes accustomed to one dish it will usually refuse to bathe in another of different shape or color. In winter the water should be warmed until tepid. Even in warm weather very cold water is not advisable. If the room, ordinarily warm, becomes cold temporarily, birds should not be allowed to bathe. With the plumage wet and bedraggled there is increased sus-cep-ti-bil-i-ty to cold drafts."

"What's 'susceptibility'? asked Billy.

"That means a canary is apt to take cold if he sits around with his feathers all wet. Just as little boys sometimes take cold, from wearing wet shoes and stockings."

"I know," said Billy. "Read!"

For half an hour longer I read about canaries, how to take care of feet and bills, how to treat broken limbs and common diseases, and how to keep the cages clean. Billy was interested in all of the information. When I told him that the color of his canary might be changed somewhat by feeding it certain foods, such as sweet red pepper, during the molting season, he wanted to begin the red pepper diet right away.

I was almost as interested as Billy in learning about canaries. After he had gone to bed, I read their history, and how they are trained to sing. Do you know that a mechanical instrument, called a bird organ, that produces liquid trills, is used in training canaries?

If you want to learn all about canaries, write to me, and I'll send you the canary booklet I've been talking about. It is free, and it is called: "Canaries--Their Care and Management."

And, if you should like information on other household pets, I have found that there are leaflets on the care of parrots, peacocks, and white mice and rats. You may have these too, if you are interested.

Wednesday: "What Is Malnutrition?"